

10 December 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to our latest weekly newsletter.

I am thankful to Victoria Baumann for the music Helen Farley the flowers, Elizabeth Cooper for the prayers and assisting at the altar, Edith Hoy and Marea Niland for advancing the slides and Lynn Mulley for the Pew Sheet. Services at St John's coming up will be as follows:

Holy Communion

- Saturday at 6pm – **12 December 2020**
- Sunday at 9am – **13 December 2020**
- Wednesday at 9am – **16 December 2020**
- Morning Prayer – livestreamed daily at 8am – Tuesday to Saturday
- Evening Prayer – livestreamed daily at 5pm – Tuesday to Saturday

It was lovely to share a Christmas themed service with 5 residents at Opal Raymond Terrace Gardens last Tuesday – Peggy Davies, Joyce Wood, Edith Hostler, Ted and Mick. We even sang 2 Christmas carols – which brings me to:

From this Sunday, we will be singing hymns again at Church and our 9am service will be a sung Eucharist. The hymns will be on the screens. Latest advice from the NSW Department of Health and the Diocese is that we should wear masks to protect the health and well-being of others when we do. There will be signs placed at Church as follows:

**Our concern is for the health and wellbeing of all people who come to this church. Together we can help make our community and our church COVID-19 safe. "In order to ensure the health and wellbeing of other people, NSW Health advises that members of the congregation should wear a face mask when they are singing." Thank you for your understanding as we implement COVID-Safe worship practices.**

**OUR CHRISTMAS SERVICES FOR THIS YEAR WILL BE AS FOLLOWS:**

**SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER 6PM – LESSONS AND CAROLS – No refreshments this year**

**WEDNESDAY 23 DECEMBER 9AM – USUAL MID-WEEK EUCHARIST**

**6PM – BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**

**THURSDAY 24 DECEMBER 6PM – HOLY EUCHARIST AND CHILDREN'S SERVICE**

**11:30PM – MIDNIGHT EUCHARIST – THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD**

**FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 9AM – CHRISTMAS DAY EUCHARIST**

**SATURDAY 26 DECEMBER 6PM – ST STEPHEN'S DAY – USUAL SATURDAY EUCHARIST**

**SUNDAY 27 DECEMBER 9AM – USUAL SUNDAY EUCHARIST**

It was good having refreshments after our Sunday 9am service. There is a fact sheet – **Fact Sheet COVID safe Preparation of Refreshments** – which gives us all the health regulations to follow.

The area that is used for the service of refreshments must be set up in accordance with the **Fact Sheet: Preparing the Church Building** - available for perusing at Church.

There has been some discussion as to the rules we need to follow at Church that don't seem to be followed in other areas of our community. The rules we are following are those from the NSW Department of Health and are important for the age-group of our congregations. As you are aware, mask wearing is not mandatory; but is **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** because we take, as a Church, the health, safety and well-being of all who attend, seriously

If you have a smartphone – whether an ANDROID or I-Phone, I encourage you to download the "**Service NSW app**" onto that phone please. We began using the QR-code last weekend and at the Baptism of the 2 girls last Sunday morning. Less people were able to attend than were originally planned. The total number of people at the baptism came below the COVID capacity of St John's and so, thankfully because there was a strong wind blowing last Sunday, we were able to baptise the two girls – Faith and Alana – inside. It was a much more comfortable event for everyone.

For those who were able to attend, there was a morning tea at the Old Rectory for members of our Bible Study groups last Wednesday. It was wonderful to get together socially on what was a nice day.

It was decided at our recent Parish Meeting that from the first Sunday in February 2021 that we would return to 2 services on a Sunday – 8am and 10am.

Under the heading “**The Gift of Prayer**”, I was directed to Psalm 103:17 – “*But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children’s children.*”

A classic Christmas poem says “Over the river and through the woods, to Grandmother’s house we go. The horse knows the way to carry the sleigh through the white and drifted snow.” These words convey the joy of grandparents and grandchildren spending time together. But what if the grandchildren aren’t available? Many grandparents can’t be with their grandchildren as often as they would like. If this is you, why not give your grandchildren a special gift of prayer? Devote extra time every day to praying for your dear ones by name. Search the Scriptures for verses to pray into their lives. When Christmas Eve or Christmas Day arrives, set aside a “sweet time of prayer” on their behalf. One of the things grandparents can do better than anyone else is to pray for their grandchildren. How many of us had grandparents who were prayer warriors? Who can tell how much our lives were shaped and protected by their strong and ceaseless intercession? If you can’t spend time this Christmas **with** your grandchildren, spend it **for** your grandchildren – on your knees. [David Jeremiah – Morning and Evening Devotions – Thomas Nelson Publishers]

Thank you for continuing to support our parish financially. It is important that we all continue to support the Church through our giving. If you have internet access, you might like to consider making a direct deposit into our parish account. Thank you to those who already use this method. The parish account details are as follows: BSB 705-077 and the Account Number is 00041040 – and our account is with the Anglican Savings and Development Fund. If you don’t have internet access or prefer not to give electronically, give our Treasurer Edith a call and she can work with you on the best way to do this.

If you would like to explore what’s available in studying the bible more or praying more, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or by text message – 0401 061 789, Facebook Messenger, or email – [frsteve@bigpond.com](mailto:frsteve@bigpond.com)

#### **Prayer points for this week:**

- A continued and sustained reduction in the spread of the coronavirus around our nation.
- Those who travel on our roads
- May we all continue to **patiently and diligently obey** the directions of the health department and use caution in all our dealings
- Peace between and within countries in our world and increasing respect for and between people
- Children to be brought for baptism and their families
- For politicians and their advisors, to be guided to get the appropriate balance between Public Health needs and the needs of the economy
- **People who are on our parish prayer list and those who mourn**

Under the heading: “**Community**”, I was directed to Song of Songs 6:2 – “*My lover has gone down into his garden of delight, the place where his spices grow, to feast with those pure in heart.*”

One of the most beautiful revelations of all is that the Holy Spirit has chosen to live WITHIN believers. We are His garden of delight. JESUS came from heaven to fill the earth with His glory. He came to fill US. Together we are His body – the expression of His love. He tenderly cares for each of us, often revealing His love through the words and deeds of others. We were created for community. We need support, inspiration, comfort, and friendship. We mustn’t limit ourselves by withdrawing and waiting for the perfect opportunity to extend the hand of friendship. In some seasons, we will be the recipient; in others, we must give what we have to offer. But in all seasons, it’s important to surround ourselves with people who challenge us to be the best version of ourselves as possible. There is strength in finding where we belong. Encourage others rather than criticise them.

*Father surround me with people who share my values and seek you with a humble heart. Bless me with a group of people where I will feel celebrated, known, and accepted. Thank you for trusting me with gifts that you want me to share. As I seek to grow in you, I know you will show me where I belong. Amen*

The Divine Romance – 365 Days meditating on the Song of Songs – Brian Simmons and Gretchen Rodriguez

May GOD richly bless you as you journey with Him this week.

Fr Steve